



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Robert Sauers

Phone: +93 (0) 794 858 501

Email: rsauers@usaid.gov

Afghanistan Celebrates World Environment Day

Kabul, AFGHANISTAN | June 5, 2011 – On the occasion of World Environment Day, Afghan and U.S. government officials met today at the Queen's Palace at Babur Gardens to take part in an event organized by Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA). The event featured presentations and exhibits to stimulate awareness of the environment and enhance political attention and public action.

An initiative of the United Nations Environment Program, World Environment Day has been celebrated every year on June 5 since 1972. The goal is to become the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. The theme for this year is: "Forests: Nature at your Service." Forests cover one third of the earth's land mass and play a key role in the battle against climate change.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Kaush Arha, Deputy Senior Coordinator for Agriculture at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, said, "The U.S. Government is committed to sustaining this important partnership with the Afghan government in the field of environment and natural resources management."

NEPA was established in 2005 and serves as Afghanistan's environmental policy-making and regulatory institution. USAID provides support to NEPA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) for natural resource conservation and protection in Afghanistan.

His Excellency Mustafa Zaher, NEPA Director General highlighted the importance of spreading awareness of the environment and said "it is never too late to make a commitment to protect our environment." Also speaking at the event, His Excellency Mohammad Asif Rahimi, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, echoed these comments: "Protecting the environment is not just one individual's responsibility but that of everyone in the community."

To date, a series of national initiatives have been implemented to enforce environmental protection laws, provide public education on biodiversity and green practices, and strengthen the capacity of NEPA and MAIL as a means to bring about a sustainable, healthy natural environment in Afghanistan.

USAID embraces the occasion of World Environment Day and calls for a new way to think about how we, as a global community, approach and plan for economic growth and poverty eradication in the face of far-reaching environmental and global climate change.

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